

# THE FRENCH MYSTIC AND THE STORY OF MODERN MARTINISM

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## CHAPTER I

### THE GREAT DAY OF SAINT-MARTIN

DURING the second half of the eighteenth century it may be said without exaggeration that the intellectual, historical and political centre of all things was in the kingdom of France. The statement obtains not only because of the great upheaval of revolution which was to close the epoch, but because of the activities which prepared thereto. I know not what gulfs dispart us from the scheme and order of things signified by the name of Voltaire, by Diderot and the Encyclopaedists at large, or what are the points of contact between the human understanding at this day and that which was conceived by Condorcet in his memorable treatise. But about the import and consequence of their place and time I suppose that no one can question. The same land and the same period were the centre also of occult activities and occult interests, which I mention at once because they belong to my subject, at least on the external side, since it happens quite often that where occultism is about on the surface there is mysticism somewhere behind. We may remember in this connection that a Christian mystical influence had been carried over in France from the last years of the seventeenth century through certain decades which followed: it was that of Port Royal, Fenelon and Madame Guyon, owing something - almost unawares - to the Spanish school of Quietism, as this in its turn reflected, without being aware of the fact, from preReformation sources.

As regards occult activities, if I say that their seeds were sown prior to 1750, it will be understood that I am speaking of developments which were characteristic

in a particular manner of the years that followed thereon. Occultism is always in the world, and among the French people especially there has been always some disposition to be drawn in this direction. In the eighteenth century, however, the sources for the most part are not to be found in France. The persuasive illuminations of Swedenborg the deep searchings of Jacob Bohme into God, man and the universe, the combined theosophy and magic represented by earlier and later kabalism, and a strange new sense of the Mysteries coming out from a sleep of the centuries with the advent of Symbolical Freemasonry these and some others with a root of general likeness were foreign in respect of their origins, but they found their homes in France. So also were certain splendid historical adventurers who travelled in the occult sciences, as other merchants travel in the wares of the normal commercial world. I refer of course to Saint-Germain and Cagliostro, but they are signal examples or types, for they did not stand alone. There were men with new gospels and revelations of all kinds; there were alchemists and magi in the byways, as well as on<sup>^</sup> the public roads and in the King's palaces. Perhaps above all there were those who travelled in Rites, meaning Masonic Rites, carrying strange charters and making claims which had never been heard of previously in the age-long chronicle of occult things.

When one comes to reflect upon it, the great, many-sided Masonic adventure may be said to stand for the whole, to express it in the world of signs, as actually and historically speaking there came a day, before the French Revolution, when it seemed about to absorb the whole. All the occult sciences, all the ready-made evangels, all philosophies, the ever-transpiring new births in time ceased to be schemes on paper and came to be embodied in Grades.

So also the past, though it may be thought to have buried its dead, began to give them back to the Rites, and not as sheeted ghosts, but as things so truly risen and so much affirming life that they denied their own death and even that they had fallen asleep. Of such was the Rosy Cross. It came about in this manner that our Emblematical Institution, which was born, so to speak, at an Apple- Tree Tavern and nursed in its early days at the Rummer and Grapes or the Goose and

Gridiron, may be said to have passed through a second birth in France. It underwent otherwise a great transformation, was clothed in gorgeous vestments and decorated with magnificent titles. It contracted in like manner the adornment of innumerable spiritual marriages, which were fruitful in spiritual progeny. I have pronounced its encomium elsewhere and that of the Rites and Grades, the memorable Orders and Chivalries which came thus into being. (1) More numerous still were the foster sons and daughters, being things connected with Masonry but not belonging thereto, even in the widest sense of its Emblematic Art. Of illegitimate children by scores, things of rank imposture or gross delusion, I do not need to speak. It is sufficient to say that Holy Houses of Masonry were everywhere in the land of France, and everywhere also were its royal standards unrolled. There is no question, from one point of view, that all the claims belonged to a world of dreams, that from old-world history they drew only its fables, from antique science its myths, that the dignities conferred in proceedings were delivered in a glass of faerie, and that the emblazoned programme of high intent and purpose were apt to fade strangely and seem written in invisible ink under the cold light of fact. But the reality behind the dreams must be sought in the spirit of the dreamers, for whom something had happened which opened all the doors and unfolded amazing vistas of possibility on every side about them.

The man who held the keys and indeed had forged them was no other than Voltaire, who in this connection stands of course for an intellectual movement at large, which movement meant emancipation from the fetters of thought and action. To summarise the situation in a sentence, apart from the Church and its dogma, all things looked possible for a moment. The peculiar Masonic "system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols," might lead humanity either back to the perfection which it had lost or forward to that which it desired and could in mind descry dimly, however far away. The new prophets and their vaunted revelations might have God behind their gospels, and the darkness of the occult sciences might veil unknown Masters, rather than emissaries of

perdition. Condemned practices, forbidden arts might lead through clouds of mystery into light of knowledge, and in this light history might call to be written out anew. We know at this day that Masonic legends are matters of fond invention, but some of them are old at the root, and we can understand in the eighteenth century how they came to pass as fact, more especially since the root of some was a Secret Tradition in Israel. When it came about, under circumstances which cannot be recited here, that Masonic attention was drawn to the old Order of Knights Templar, which had been brought to the rack and the faggot as possessors of a strange knowledge drawn from the East, a Rite or a budget of Rites which claimed that the Order had never passed out of being was like a fortune to those who devised.

It is from this point of new that we must survey the amazing growth of Masonry in all its multitude of forms. We shall conclude that it was pursued zealously, with a heart turned towards the truth, and as one who believes that he may not stand alone, I am not unprepared to think that some of the traditional histories, to us as monstrous growths, represented to the makers their views on the probability of things presented in the guise of myth. It was saved in this manner for them from the common charge of fraud. This is my judgment of the time, and there is one thing more on the wondrous side of the subject, the expectations and the vistas seen in front. As the time drew on for Voltaire to be called away and when the chief High Grades of Masonry connoted a reaction from much that is typified by his name, there rose up another personality holding one key only, but it looked like *clavis abeconditorum a constitutione mundi*. This was Anton Mesmer, prominent in Parisian circles, a Mason like the rest of them, and destined presently to have more than one Grade enshrining his discovery and designed for the spread of its tenets. Granting the fact of his unseen but vital fluid, there was a root of truth at least in the long past of Magia, in the entrancements of vestal and pythoness, above all in occult medicine. So opened some other doors, and when Puysegur discovered clairvoyance again as it might be for a moment - the mystery of all the hiddenness looked on the point of unveiling. But the doors

shut suddenly, the dreams and the epoch closed in the carnage of the French Revolution, and thereafter rose the baleful cresset of Corsica.

I have dwelt upon French Freemasonry because it is impossible to pass over it in presenting a picture of the period, but more especially because the life of the mystic Saint-Martin is bound up therewith for a certain number of years. Among the Rites which mattered at the moment his name connects with two, being the glory of the Strict Observance and the problematical Order of Elect Priesthood.(1) Behead the first there lies the mystery of its Unknown Superiors, but this, when reduced to its equivalent in simple fact, means the circumstances under which and the people by whom its root-matter was communicated in France to Baron von Hund, who returned with it to his German Fatherland and there formed it into a Rite, whose advent marked an epoch for evermore in Masonry. But in respect of the second there lies behind it the claim of Pasqually's apostolate in that for which it stood and whence, if from anywhere, he derived on his own part - as, for example, the Rosy Cross. I cannot trace here the history of the Strict Observance: it claimed to represent a perpetuation in secret of the Knights Templar and to be ruled by a hidden headship appertaining to that source. It may almost be said that it took Masonic Germany by storm, and planted its banners triumphantly all over Europe, save only in those British Isles where the Art and Craft of Emblematic Freemasonry rose up in 1717 among the taverns of London. It fell to pieces ultimately because it was in no better position to prove its claims than was the Craft itself to justify its recurrent appeals to the hoary past. But the point which concerns us is that before its karma overtook it the Rite was domiciled in France and had headquarters at Lyons under the government of a Provincial Grand Prior of Auvergne. It was transformed under these auspices from a Holy House of the Temple into a Spiritual House of God, in the keeping of a sacred chivalry pledged to the work of His glory and the promotion of peace on earth among all men of goodwill. It is the Apex of Masonry or the diadem of this Daughter of the Mysteries.

As regards Martines de Pasqually and his Rite des Elus Coens, or Order of the

Elect Priesthood, he would seem to have been of Spanish descent or extraction, though he was born in Grenoble, and he is said to have been a coach-builder by trade - a piece of information which comes, however, from a hostile source. It may stand at its value and in any case does not signify, for it must be admitted, I believe, that he was of comparatively humble origin, and has extant letters swarm with orthographical errors, all has intellectual gifts notwithstanding and also has spiritual dedications. Whatever has been said to the contrary, it is quite certain - so far as there is evidence before us that he emerged into the light of his Masonic career for the first time in 1760 and that the place was Toulouse, where he presented himself at a certain Lodge, bearing a hieroglyphic charter and laying claim to occult powers. A year later he emerged again at Bordeaux where he appears to have been recognized on his own terms by another Lodge, which he had satisfied in respect of his claims. In 1766 he proceeded to Paris and there laid the foundations of a Sovereign Tribunal, which included several prominent Masons. He was again at Bordeaux: in 1767, and three years later there are said to have been Lodges of his Rite not only at that city but at Montpellier, Avignon, La Rochelle and Metz, as well as at Paris and Versailles. The Temple at Lyons was founded a little later.

Such is the external story of the Rite in bare outline, up to the time when for my present purpose - it can be merged in that of Saint-Martin. And now as to that for which it stood. I have intimated that Martines de Pasqually pretended to occult powers, and that there was at least one Lodge which held that he had proved his claim. I shall show later on the extent of our present knowledge respecting the content of his Rite. It had a certain ceremonial procedure, which - like all Ritual - must have been sacramental in character, or with a certain meaning implied by its modes and forms; but only to the least extent was it otherwise veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. On the contrary, it was concerned with the communication of a secret doctrine by way of direct instruction and with a practice which must be called secret in the ordinary sense which attaches to the idea of occult art or science. The kind of practice was that which endeavours to

establish communication with unseen intelligence by the observances of Ceremonial Magic. There was procedure of this kind in the course of the Grades, or of some at least among them, and Pasqually, the Grand Sovereign, was also Grand Magus or Operator. It will be seen in a word that the Rite of Elect Priesthood had a very different undertaking in hand from anything embraced by the horizon of Craft Masonry or the rank and file of High Grades. The doctrine embodied a particular view concerning the Fall of Man and of all animated things belonging to the material order, it looked for the restoration of all, and on man as the divinely appointed agent of that great work to come.

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## CHAPTER II

### EARLY LIFE OF THE MYSTIC

LOUIS CLAUDE DE SAT MARTIN belonged to the French nobility, as indicated by his armorial bearings and the coronet superposed thereon, but I have not come across his genealogy in any extant memorial. He was described very often in the past, and even by early French biographers, as the Marquis de Saint-Martin, but this is a mistake and has been rectified some time since: it does not appear that there was any title in his branch of the family. Though he suffered little inconvenience when the French Revolution came, he was included among the proscribed, meaning the noble classes. He was of Touraine stock, and was born at Amboise in that district on January 18, 1743. It is said that his mother died soon after and that the father married again. We have his own evidence that filial respect was a sacred sentiment of his infancy; that all his happiness was perhaps due to his stepmother; that her teaching inspired him with love for God and man; and that the intercourse of their minds took place in perfect freedom. (1) There are various indications of his delicacy in early years, as when he tells us that he changed skins seven times in babyhood; that his body was a rough sketch; that he had very little "astral," meaning psychic force; that he could play passably on the violin, but that owing to physical weakness his fingers could not

vibrate with sufficient power to make a cadence. (1) I mention these points to show that, albeit Saint-Martin attained a fair age, he seems to have been always physically frail, amidst great mental activities. For the rest, there is no need to dwell upon his youth, as regards external facts, nor have many transpired. He was educated at the college of Pont-Leroy, was designed for the career of the law and entered thereupon, but it proved so entirely distasteful that his father allowed him to exchange it for the profession of arms, he being then about twenty-two years of age.

On the inward side, or as regards his early dedications, we have the benefit of his own intimations, too brief and few as they are. There is a work of the past, by a writer named Abadie, on The Art of Self-Knowledge, and though on my own part I have not brought away from it any striking recollections, it had a certain repute in its day. Saint-Martin tells us that he read it with delight in his youth, though he recognized later that it was characterised by sentiment rather than depth of thought. It was instrumental probably ill disposing him towards the life of contemplation and the following of the mystic path. There was also Burlamaqui, to whom he says that he owed his love for the natural basis of reason and human justice. So far as regards books, but beyond these there were the promptings of his own spirit, and in respect of these he tells us (1) that at the age of eighteen, amidst all the confusions of philosophy, he had attained certitude as to God and his own soul; (2) that the seeker for wisdom had need of nothing more; (3) that the foundation of all his happiness must be in contentment only with the truth; (4) that absorption in material things was incomprehensible for those who knew the treasures of reason and the spirit; (5) that human science explained matter by matter, and that after its putative proofs there were other demonstrations needed; (6) that the inmost prayer of his soul was for God to abide therein to the exclusion of all else, in which manner he came to see, thus early, that Divine Union is the true end of man; for I find this further thought set down as belonging to his first spiritual years, namely, (7) that we are all widowed and that we are called to a second marriage.



The influence of the Duc de Choiseul secured a commission for Saint-Martin in the regiment of Foix. The next three years of his life, which are practically a blank, so far as memorials are concerned, have been filled up by biographers, following on obvious lines and those of least resistance. His occupations, in a word, were the duties of his profession and the study of religious philosophy. There is of course no question, and so far from the life of a soldier offering any barrier to his dedications, they opened a path before him which he followed with advantage for a certain distance and remembered his experience therein with unflinching affection and reverence. As we learn by his correspondence, Martines de Pasqually had married the niece of a retired major in the regiment of Foix, and he was known personally by the brother-officers of Saint-Martin, De Grainville among others, and in the end by Saint-Martin himself. De Grainville, De Balzac and Du Guers were initiates of the Elect Priesthood, and at some uncertain date between August 13 and October 2, 1768, Saint-Martin was received into the Order. According to his own testimony he had taken the first three Grades en bloc, apparently by verbal communication. They were conferred on him by M. de Balzac. (1) There is no record as to how they impressed him, but among several references to the Grand Sovereign of the Rite on the part of his disciple for a period there is one which appertains more especially to the initial stage of their connection. "It is to Martines de Pasqually," says Saint-Martin, "that I owe my introduction to the higher truths." (1a) This sentence was written either on the eve of the Revolution or soon after, and having regard to the spiritual distance travelled already by the witness it is pregnant testimony.

As regards the Ritual-content of the Elect Priesthood, we know certainly about seven Grades, being (1) Apprentice Elect Priest; (2) Companion Elect Priest; (3) Particular Master Elect Priest; (4) Master Elect Priest; (5) Grand Master Priests, otherwise Grand Architects; (6) Grand Elects of Zerubbabel; and (7) a Grade of Rose Croix, not otherwise and more fully particularized, though it is a subject of frequent allusion in the correspondence of Martines de Pasqually and Saint-Martin. In the year 1895 Papus, otherwise Dr. Gerard Encausse, testified

that the "Rituals of the Elect Priests," with other numerous and important archives, had been transmitted as follows: (1) To J.B. Willermoz, a merchant of Lyons, circa 1782. He was one of the successors of Pasqually and Grand Prior of Auvergne in the Strict Observance. (2) From Willermoz to his nephew. (3) From this nephew to his widow. (4) From her to M. Cavernier, an unattached student of occultism. There are other documents held by the descendants of M. Jacques Matter, one of the early and most competent biographers of Saint-Martin. By the mediation of M. Elie Steel, a bookseller of Lyons, Papers was placed in communication with Cavernier, and was enabled to copy "the principal documents." (1a) Whether these included the Rituals does not appear, nor is it possible to indicate the present locality of the originals. It is certain, however, that Papus transcribed the Catechisms attached to six out of the seven Grades, as he published them at the date mentioned, (2a) and I have full evidence also that he conferred the Grade of Rose Crois on at least one occasion, some years subsequently, as we shall see more particularly at the close of the present monograph.

In the absence of the Rituals, which have never been printed, while I have failed to find manuscript copies in England, either in private hands or in any Masonic or other library, our available knowledge of the Grades is confined to the Catechisms and to the correspondence mentioned above. I will take these sources separately, as the first is concerned with the doctrine and symbolism of the Rite, and the second with its peculiar practices. (1) Apprentice Elect Priest. - The instruction of this Grade imparted perfect knowledge - *en hypothesi* - on the existence of the Grand Architect of the Universe, on the principle of man's spiritual emanation and on his direct correspondence with his Master. It is obvious that the knowledge in question was conveyed dogmatically. As regards the origin of the Order, it derived from the Creator himself and had been perpetuated from the days of Adam, that is to say, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Melchisedek, and afterwards to Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Zerubbabel and Christ. The meaning is that there has been always a Secret Tradition in the

world, and its successive epochs are marked by successive custodians. It is in this sense also that the purpose of the Order is said to be the maintenance of man in his primeval virtue, his spiritual and divine powers. (2) Companion Elect Priest. - Having been told of our "first estate" in the previous Degree, the Candidate hears in the next concerning the Fall of Man and personifies it in his own case. He has passed from the perpendicular to the triangle, or from union with his First Principle to the triplicity of material things. The Grade of Companion typifies this transition. The Candidate is engaged to counteract the work of the Fall, in which his own spirit has been undone, and his whole world is in travail thereupon, to "acquire the age of perfection." The root of all is in a living realization of what is implied by the first estate of man, his ambition, his lapse and his punishment. There is one allusion to the pouring out of a more than human blood, but this subject is reserved to some later stage of advancement in the Order. (3) Particular Master Elect Priest. In the conventional symbolism, the Candidate passes from the triangle to the circles: he is at work in the circles of expiation, which are said to be six and in correspondence with six conceptions employed by the Great Architect in constructing the Universal Temple. The symbolism of the Temple of Solomon is explained in this Degree, and its members are called to the practice of charity, good example and all duties of the Order, for the reintegration of their individual principles, their Mercury, Sulphur and Salt, in that unity of Divine Principles from which they first came forth. Here is the only distinct Hermetic reference found in the memorials of the Rite. (4) Elect Master. - The Candidate enters the circle of reconciliation, and in common with his peers is engaged henceforward in warfare with the enemies of Divine Law and of man at large on earth. We hear also, but vaguely, concerning One Who is the Elect of God, Who has reconciled earth with man and all with the Grand Architect of the Universe. It is to be noted that in references of this kind we are left to infer that the Reconciler is Christ, for He is not mentioned by name. The Resurrection of Easter morning is referred to in similarly unprecise terms, and so also the sacrifice on Calvary. It transpires, however, that the warfare of

the Grade is against the enemies of the Christian Religion. The initiations and adornments of Craft Masonry have been stigmatised as apocryphal in the first Grade, and yet they were sufficiently essential to be conferred invariably in summary form on every Candidate for the Elect Priesthood - presumably in cases where they had not been taken previously. In the Grade of Elect Master he is warned to cut himself off from all clandestine secret societies, communicating apocryphal instructions, which are "contrary to Divine Law and to the Order." (5) Grand Master Priests, surnamed Grand Architects. - The Candidate was thirty-three years old in the fourth Grade and he has now attained the age of eighty. It would seem that he receives some kind of ordination. It is a Grade of light and the Temple is ablaze with light. There are four Wardens, who represent the four symbolical Angels of the four quarters of heaven, recalling the occult mystery of the Enochian Tablets, according to the memorials of Dr. John Dee in The Faithful Relation. The ordination whatever its form - is said to be operated by the thought and will of the Eternal, and by the power, word and intention of His deputies. The members of this Grade are occupied with the purification of their physical senses so that they may participate in the work of the spirit. They are engaged otherwise in constructing new Tabernacles and rebuilding old. There are said to be four kinds of Tabernacles in the Universal Temple, being (1) the body of man, (2) the body of woman, (3) the Tabernacle of Moses, and (4) that of the Sun, or the "temporal spiritual" Tabernacle which the Great Architect of the Universe "has destined to contain the sacred names and words of material and spiritual reaction, distinguished by wisdom as by a torch of universal temporal life." There is no further allusion to this Spiritual Sun. The Candidate now hears the Name of Christ, apparently for the first time in his progress through the Rite. It must be said that the Catechisms are rather obscure documents, and inferences drawn therefrom as to procedure in the Rituals are therefore precarious, but it would seem that the Candidate in this Degree begins to take part in those magical operations which are the chief concern of the Rite, as we shall see. (6) Grand Elect of Zerubbabel. - The Prince of the People is represented as a type of Christ

and his work as typical of redemption. In the Masonic Grade known as the Royal Arch the Candidate testifies that he belongs to the tribe of Judah, but a Grand Elect on the contrary protests against such an imputation. He is of the tribe of Ephraim, described as (1) that which has always enjoyed freedom, and (2) the last of the tribes of Israel but the first of the Elect. His earthly age is defined to be seventy years, while that of his spiritual election is seven. The seventy years of captivity are those of material life, or life apart from election and from the ordination of true priesthood. The election attained by the Candidate imposes on him the spiritualization of his material passions, the conquest of the enemies of truth and those also of liberty. His rank is friend of God, protector of virtue and professor of truth. It is to be noted that he has had no part in the building of the Second Temple, because it was a type only of that Temple of our humanity which none but the Spirit can rebuild. This being so, it is difficult to see why members of the Grade are called Grand Elects of Zerubbabel. (7) Grade of Rose Croix - particulars of which are wanting, as already seen, there being no Catechism extant. But the true Rose Croix is of Christ, and without it Pasqually's Rite would have been left at a loose end, for it looked through all its Grades to that Divine Event which ushered in the Christian Era.

In the above enumeration respecting the content of the Rite I have taken its Catechisms as my guide, but it remains to add that there is some confusion on the subject. A letter of the Grand Sovereign has been quoted under date of June 16, 1760, in which the Grades are set out according to the following list: (1) Apprentice, (2) Companion, (3) Particular Master, (4) Grand Elect Master, (5) Apprentice Priest, (6) Companion Priest, (7) Master Priest, (8) Grand Master Architect. (1a) To these Ragon added a Grade of Knight Commander, (2a) which Papus seeks to identify with that of Rose Croix. I find no trace of the letter in published Pasqually memorials, and the date is certainly wrong. As regards Ragon, his mammoth lists of Degrees, Rites and Orders are utterly uncritical, but the fact that in this case he produces an enumeration which is corroborated somewhere in the unpublished correspondence of the Grand Sovereign may

justify us in thinking that there is authority for the ninth item and that the entire scheme may have represented an early state of Pasqually's Masonic plan. There is in any case the fullest evidence that his Rite was at work when several of its Ceremonies were only in an embryonic stage. I observe also that in a letter of Saint-Martin dated May 20, 1771, (1a) there is reference to a Degree under the initials G.R., which corresponds to no title extant in either scheme, as it is certainly not Rose Croix, this being always represented by R (picture of Cross) in Saint-Martin's correspondence. Amidst variations and uncertainties, we are, I think, justified in regarding the Grade-Names at the head of the several Catechisms as those appertaining to the Rite in its completed form.

On the surface of these documents there is nothing to suggest that the Grades to which they are attributed were connected with Ceremonial Magic. They belong to the part of doctrine and the part also of symbolism, the latter including official secrets signs, tokens, words and similar accidents of purely Masonic convention. For the practical part we must have recourse to the correspondence of Pasqually (2a) and - as it may seem, perhaps curiously to that of Saint-Martin. The letters of both were addressed to Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, the merchant of Lyons, who appears to have held the rank of Inspector- General in 1767, though more than a year later he is denominated Apprentice Rose Croix: it would seem therefore that the jurisdiction implied by the broader title could have been exercised only over lower Grades of the Order. On August 13, 1768, the Grand Sovereign began to instruct Willermoz in occult or magical procedure, and continued to do so at long intervals until 1772, the communications in all being ten in number, so far as they have become available in published works. The operations imposed were to be performed by Willermoz in the solitude of a private room, and have therefore nothing to do with ceremonial observance in Lodge or Temple. The practice in these - for it appears that there was a practice - seems to have been performed by Pasqually himself, looking forward presumably to that time when some of his disciples would have developed occult powers under his tuition and would be qualified to operate on their own part in public, so to speak, with some assurance

of success.

The Ceremonial Magic was Christian and presupposed throughout the efficacy of religious formulae consecrated from time immemorial by the usage of the Latin Church. The instructions reduced into summary form may be presented thus: (1) The Novice was covenanted to abstain from flesh meat, apparently of all kinds, for the rest of his life. (2) As an Apprentice Rose Croix he was forbidden occult work except for three days in succession at the beginning of either equinox, meaning three days before the full moon of March and September. (3) As regards spiritual preparation, he must recite the Office of the Holy Spirit every Thursday at any hour of the day; the Miserere mei, standing in the centre of the room at night before retiring, facing East; and the De Profundis on both knees and with face bowed to the ground. (4) The clothing prescribed is elaborate, including all insignia of the Order that the Novice was entitled to wear, but here it will be sufficient to say that as he must be deprived of all metals, even pins, he removed his ordinary clothing except vest, drawers, socks and felt slippers. Over these he placed a white alb, with broad flame-coloured borders. (5) He described the segment of a circle on the East side of the room and a complete circle of retreat on the West side, placing the proper inscriptions at the proper points, with the symbols and wax tapers. (6) These arrangements completed, he prostrated himself at full length within the western circle in complete darkness, for a space of six minutes, after which he arose and lighted all the tapers belonging to that circle. (7) He then prostrated himself within the eastern segment, pronouncing one of the Names inscribed thereon and supplicating God, in virtue of the power given to His servants here reciting all the inscribed angelic names - to grant that which was desired by the Novice with humble and contrite - heart. (8) The Novice again rose up and performed other operations, including the use of a particular kind of incense and the recital of certain invocations which are not given in the text. (9) The operation was to last one hour and a half, onward from midnight, no food having been taken since noon. There are other directions, not always in harmony with those which preceded, but the instruction is left unfinished, and as

regards these initial operations we do not know what purpose they served or what manifestations characterised success therein.

About two years later Pasqually supplied further directions of a more advanced or at least more elaborate kind, the circle of retreat being now located in the centre of the room; but again the procedure depends on particulars which have been sent previously and the nature of which is unknown. We hear also of visions, described as white, blue, clear ruddy white, and so forth; of visible sparks, of goose-flesh sensations, as of things seen and felt by mere novices of the Order. As to purpose, however, and result there is still nothing that transpires, except indeed the complete failure of Willermoz to obtain any satisfaction. The letters of Saint-Martin to the same correspondent on the same subject may be said practically to begin as those of Pasqually ended, and they are models of clear exposition, compared with those of the Grand Sovereign. (1a) They endeavour in the first place to encourage Willermoz and dissuade him from supposing either that he is himself to blame or that the occult ceremonies are invalid. At an early stage one of them was accompanied by "the grand ceremonial" of the Grand Architects, a complete plan of this Grade and a prayer or invocation for daily use. We hear also of a "simple form of ordination" under the initials G.R., to which I have alluded previously; of extended and reduced versions of some Grades; of Elect and Priestly Grades. There are references to Latin originals of certain workings; to procedure with Candidates, on their reception as Grand Architects, evidently magical in character; forms of conjuration and exorcism of evil spirits which do not differ generically from those of historical Rituals; and much on the formation of circles, with their proper modes of inscription. These things do not extend our knowledge, except upon points of detail, and after midsummer, 1773, the character of the correspondence changes. Saint-Martin had supplied for a period the place, as it were, of a secretary to his occult Master, but Pasqually was called to St. Domingo in 1772 on "temporal business" of his own and was destined never to return.

It follows that the Ceremonial Magic of the Elect Priesthood is by no means fully



available from published sources; but so far as the procedure is before us it does not differ, as I have intimated, from the common records of the art except as these records differ one from another. This being the case, and as most of us are acquainted with the preposterous concerns of Art Magic in the past, we have, in the next place, to account as we can for an opinion on has early school expressed by Saint-Martin long after he had abandoned it and all its ways: "I will not conceal from you that in the school through which I passed, now more than twenty-five years ago, communications of all kinds were numerous and frequent, that I had my share in these like all the others, and that every sign indicative of the Repairer was found therein." (1a) He said also: "There were precious things in our first school, and I am even disposed to believe that M. Pasqually, to whom you allude and who, since it must be said, was our Master, had the active key of all that our dear Bohme sets forth in his theories, but that he did not regard us as fitted for such high truths." (2a) In the peculiar terminology of Saint- Martin, the Repairer signified Christ, and what therefore were those "communications" obtained as the result of invocations recited in magical circles drawn with chalk on the floor and inscribed, as in the devices of old sorcery, with more or less unintelligible names? After what manner precisely did they manifest or at least indicate the presence of Christ? For an answer to these questions we depend on the accuracy of a single witness who was either in possession of many priceless unpublished documents or had access thereto as President of the Martinist Order - the late Gerard Encausse, otherwise Dr. Papus - to whom my notes have referred already. He presents us with further extracts from the letters of Martines de Pasqually, who affirms therein (1) that if the thing - La chose - were not as I have certified and had it not been manifested as it was, not only in my own presence but in that of so many others who desired to know it, I should have abandoned it myself and should have been in conscience bound to dissuade those who approached it in good faith; (2) that ill respect of the failure of Willermoz there was no ground for surprise because "the Thing is sometimes severe towards those who desire it too ardently before the time." (1a) One would

think that La chose signified simply the subject or matter in hand, but according to Papus it was the Intelligence or Mysterious Being which manifested in response to the invocations. We are to interpret the reference in this sense when Saint-Martin says, in his communication to Willermoz of March 25, 1771, that he was "convinced concerning the thing before having received the most efficacious of our ordinations." I do not know how Papus satisfied himself respecting this forced and arbitrary construction, but whether it is correct or not, there is no question as to the fact that a Mysterious Being manifested by the evidence of the archives or that it was called subsequently by other names, such as "the Unknown Agent charged with the work of initiation," an expression of Willermoz. It follows that we have good ground for accepting the view of Abbe Fournie, another disciple of the Rite, when he said that Pasqually had the faculty of confirming his instructions by means of "external visions, at first vague and passing with the rapidity of lightning, but afterwards more and more distinct and prolonged." (1a) Having established this point of fact, which sufficiently distinguishes the Grand Sovereign from other purveyors of High Masonic Grades in France of the eighteenth century, and his Rite also from many scores of contemporary institutions, we have to ascertain - if we can - what characterized the manifestations, so that they justified Saint-Martin in the extraordinary view which he held concerning them, not in the first flush of occult experiences, but at a mature period of life.

Meanwhile I have sketched his position and environment at the beginning of his intellectual career. As a result of exchanging the profession of law for that of arms, he had entered a circle which brought him to the gates of certain Instituted Mysteries, then at work about him; he had been initiated, passed and raised in the parlance of Blue Masonry; he had received the ordination of the Elect Priesthood; and had attained its highest Grade, being that of Rose Croix. It remains to add that he had left the army and was now approaching a point where the road which he had travelled divided: he had therefore to choose a path.

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## CHAPTER III

### THE SEARCH AFTER TRUTH

THE correspondence between Saint-Martin and Willermoz had continued for two years and five months, but they had never seen one another. In the early part of September, 1773, Saint-Martin repaired to Lyons and was domiciled in that town for something approaching a year, during part of which he was apparently the guest of his rich Masonic brother. His own resources were small, and there are indications that he was not on the best terms with his father, no doubt owing to the fact that for the second time he had abandoned a career in life. We have seen that there was a Temple of the Elect Priesthood at Lyons, which was also an historically important centre of Freemasonry in France, and Willermoz was an active member and officer of all the Rites. Saint-Martin, on the other hand, cared little or less than nothing for ceremonial procedure, for Ritual which he found empty and for the hollow pomp of titles. By his own evidence, the offices of Ceremonial Magic were only less distasteful, notwithstanding his high opinion of the influences at work among them in the circle to which he belonged. He affirms that he had no "virtuality" in activities of that kind; that he had little "talent" for its operations; that he "experienced at all times so strong an inclination to the intimate secret way that this external one never seduced me further, even in my youth"; and that he exclaimed more than once to his Master: "Can all this be needed to find God?" (1a) Such being the case, there need be no cause for surprise that Saint-Martin put on record long after his opinion that the "first sojourn at Lyons in 1773" was not much more "profitable" than others which he made later and especially in 1785. (2a) It was important, however, in another and very different way, for it marked the beginning of his literary life. "It was at Lyons," he tells us, "that I wrote the book *Des Erreurs et de la Verite*, partly by way of occupation and because I was indignant with the philosophers so called, having read in Boulanger that the origin of religions was to be sought in the terror occasioned by the catastrophes of Nature. I wrote some thirty pages at first,

which I showed to a circle that I was instructing at the house of M. Willermoz, and they pledged me to continue. It was composed towards the end of 1773 and at the beginning of 1774, in the space of four months and by the kitchen-fire, for there was no other at which I could warm myself.

He was not therefore in residence during those months with his Masonic friend: he was probably en pension somewhere, and not too well situated because of his means. The task was executed with great expedition, having regard to its subject and the deep searching demanded throughout its length: indeed, his application must have been unremitting, the result comprising nearly five hundred pages.

The next point which it is requisite to note, for reasons which will appear immediately, is that it is written in the first person, which indeed recurs continually, so that the *Philosophe Inconnu* whose name appears on the title is with the reader from beginning to end. The individual note was characteristic of Saint-Martin's writings throughout his literary life, but it is to be observed that though ever present it was never insistent and was never touched by egotism. He spoke from the fullness of the heart, as from an unfailing fountain, and has even put on record his feeling that there was not enough paper in the world to contain all that he had to deliver, could he only reduce it to writing. He had also a certain sacred tenderness towards the children of his mind, even when he dwelt on their imperfections. In a word, he was a typical literary man of the better kind, as well as a true mystic.

We are told elsewhere that his works, and especially the earliest in time, were the fruit of his affectionate attachment to man, and that as regards *Des Errears et de la Verite*, being concerned only with making war on materialistic philosophy, he could not permit the reader to see precisely where he was being led, because it would have set him at once in opposition, "the Scriptures having fallen into such discredit among men." (1a) It follows not only that they are not quoted in the work; but that Christ Himself is referred to in a veiled manner, as the Active and Intelligent Cause, the Agent, Guide of Man, etc. It would be easy to enumerate other points, showing that Saint-Martin's first work was schemed and excogitated

and written from his own basis, under one reserve only, that the root-matter of its doctrine is presented as coming from a secret source, that he was under pledges concerning it and that owing to these a reservation was imposed upon him, so that his elucidations could be carried only to a certain point. Here is a clear issue, and as regards the source itself we are not in doubt concerning it, since the year 1899, when Martmes de Pasqually's important *Traite de la Reintegration des Etres* was published for the first time in France. It is practically possible to check every point of reticence registered by Saint-Martin and to see what lies behind it by reference to this treatise, it being understood that Pasqually on his own part derived from other teachers, to us unknowns with whom he seems to have been in personal communication, but whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell.

Having presented the literary history of *Des Erreurs* in this manner, I have now to contrast with it the counter-view put forward by Dr. Papus on the alleged authority of his Martinistic archives. He affirms, (1) that the book *Des Erreurs* was due almost entirely to an "invisible origin"; (2) that the being whom in 1895 he had certified as "always designated under the enigmatic name of *La chose*" was called the Unknown Philosopher; (3) that it was he who gave forth the work as regards the major part; (4) that he dictated 166 cahiers d'instruction; (5) that some of these were transcribed by Saint-Martin; (6) that the "Unknown Philosopher" gave orders for Saint-Martin to assume this name; and that (7) the said "Agent" himself destroyed about eighty cahiers in 1790 to prevent them falling into the hands of Robespierre's emissaries, "who were making unheard-of efforts to acquire them." It follows that Saint-Martin has given an altogether misleading account of his first book, and that in spite of its strong and prevailing personal note it cannot be called his work. I have, however, collated his statements, and those who know him are likely to prefer his version of the matter to archives largely unpublished and not available for inspection, as Dr. Papus refers expressly (1a) to documents reserved for the sole use of the directing Committee at the head of his Supreme Council. When, therefore, he states

further that the archives include various sheets of instructions communicated by "the Unknown Agent" and annotated by the hand of Saint Martin we have to regard it in the light of later revelations supplied by the President of the Martinist Order, remembering that in 1899 he promised to produce proofs in a volume devoted to the mystic. That volume appeared in 1902 and contained fifty unpublished letters of Saint-Martin, to some of which I have referred. They are prefaced by a biographical summary written around the documents. In neither one nor the other is any ray of light cast upon the previous claims: they are indeed the subject of allusion only in a single sentence. But we obtain unexpected enlightenment in other respects. Whereas there is no evidence whatever of communications dictated by the Unknown Agent during the life of Pasqually or for over ten years after his death, we are told by Dr. Papus, though there is no allusion to the fact in Saint-Martin's letters, that in 1785, the Agent in question, who seems to have remained in abeyance since the death of the Grand Sovereign, began to manifest at Lyolls, where he dictated "nearly one hundred folios," being those precisely of which the majority were burned in 1790. The archives of the Order, it is added, include the bulk of those that were saved. In place, moreover, of leaving seen, transcribed and annotated a mass of written instructions prior to 1785, we are told only of teachings that are likely to have been "heard" and to have been incorporated into his work by the author of *Des Erreurs*.

It will be seen that the ground has changed completely and that we are getting nearer to the probable facts of the case. I do not doubt that Willermoz and his circle received psychic communications in one or another psychic condition, induced by prolonged operations inspired by that intent, or with the aid of "lucids," the intervention of whom is admitted. (2a) I do not doubt that they were reduced into writing, and as the news of what was taking place brought Saint-Martin to Lyons with all possible speed, it is certain that he read, he may well have transcribed and annotated, but all this was years subsequently to the publication of *Des Erreurs et de la Verite*. I am preferring no charge whatever

against Dr. Papus, who sealed a laborious life by a heroic death in the cause of the sick and wounded during the Great War. We were, moreover, personally acquainted, and our relations were always cordial. But he was unfortunately a most inaccurate writer, and the present monograph might be extended to twice its size if I analysed the errors which fill his three books dealing with Martinistic subjects. As regards the archives, he tells us in 1895 that he had been permitted to see those which were in the possession of a certain M. Cavernier and had transcribed some of them, devoting one week to the task. (1a) In 1899 it looks as if some originals had come into his possession, though he does not explain how. I conceive that in this year he was in confusion as to the dates, extent and precise nature of the psychic communications. By 1902 he had made better progress with them and modified his affirmations accordingly, but without overtly withdrawing anything. I conceive that in this manner the question may be permitted to rest, unless and until the present custodians of the archives may decide to proceed further with the work of their publication. It seems to me that I have adopted a reasonable and middle ground which accounts for the facts without accusing anyone. Under the aegis of Pasqually the Rite of the Elect Priesthood was one of occult instruction as well as occult practice and the pageant - such as it may have been - of cumulative Grades. The teaching was of course under pledges, and that part of it which Saint-Martin felt permitted to unfold was put forward in his first book. La chose may refer to Pasqually's Guide in the unseen, howsoever communication was established -supposing that Papus is correct in his understanding of this term. But the pledges may have covered also instruction from other sources, the "Predecessors" about whom Pasqually wrote to Willermoz on April 13, 1768. (1a) I take it that the sum of instruction received from all sources is enshrined in the Grand Sovereign's Treatise on Reintegration.

We have seen that it is reflected also into the first work of Saint-Martin, as through the alembic of an original mind, disposed already to the higher elections of the human soul. A work of collation would bear this fact in mind, but there is no

opportunity to attempt it in the present place. Saint-Martin's theory of good and evil is based on the doctrine of two unequal principles, between which there is no co-operation and no analogy. Of these two the inferior became evil by the sole act of its own will, being one of opposition to the Eternal Will of Goodness, wherein is essential unity. Man in his primal estate is the most ancient of all beings in that which is understood as Nature, but he was the last which entered into its scheme. He came forth from the centre, that is to say, from the Divine Goodness, but abode in the presence thereof, and his function was intended to be that of leading all things back into unity. But he fell from this high estate, was deprived of all his ancient rights, while another Agent was commissioned to take his place. This Agent is the Active and Intelligent Cause, and thereunto, as the Great Chief and Guide, is committed the order of the universe. The inference is that this order was intended originally to have been in the hands of man until ad that is in separation shall have been reconciled with its one and only source. It is to be inferred that He or That which has been called to rule in substitution for man has become the Leader into unity, otherwise the Reconciler and Repairer, while His most important charge since that which is termed the Fall is the reconciliation of our fallen race. We have passed from unity into separation by the work of our own will, have renounced our own vocation and forfeited all our titles; but He who repairs restores, in virtue of a capacity for restoration which has always remained with us. It follows that at the time of reintegration the estate of man will be in virtual unity smith that of the Repairer, Whose true name is Christ, whereas Saint-Martin says that in respect of our potencies we are all Christs. (1a) Saint-Martin's expositions are like Craft Freemasonry, "veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." The nature of the Fall is clouded in this manner, for it is said that man descended into the region of fathers and mothers, otherwise into the circle of physical generation, in place of those generations which are spiritual. It is a parable of original unity and subsequent divorce, of the separation between subject and object, or of the lover and beloved in another form of imagery. Now, the way of division is the way of errors, but that of truth is



the way of union, or this at least is how I understand Saint-Martin in the testimonies which he bears to reality. In a sense his first work is *de omnibus rebus*, but here is the root of all. Having regard to its suggestive presentation, to its originality of thought and style, and - not least of all - to its studied reservations and allusions to a hidden source of knowledge, I can understand its extraordinary effect upon prepared minds of France in the year 1776.

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## CHAPTER IV

### A DOCTRINE OF CORRESPONDENCES

WE have seen that Saint-Martin completed his literary experiment in the early part of 1774, and in the autumn of that year he paid a short visit to Italy, in the company of a brother of Willermoz. They returned apparently to Lyons, where Saint-Martin must have been occupied for some time in seeing his work through the press. It appeared in 1775 under the pseudonym of "the Unknown Philosopher," and bearing the imprint of Edinburgh, which, however, must be understood as Lyons. We do not know when he left that city, but he was in Paris at the end of July, at Lyons again in the autumns at Tours on a flying visit, and then at Bordeaux in 1776. He had returned to Paris in March 1777. Pasqually had died at Port-au-Prince on September 20, 1774, having nominated Caignet de Lestere as his successor, he also being resident in the West Indies. The Temples of the Elect Priesthood were left to their own devices, and the mighty pageant of the Strict Observance drew several under that obedience. Willermoz became - as stated previously - Grand Prior of Auvergne, and having profited nothing in attempting to follow Pasqually's instructions concerning Ceremonial Magic, he was presumably more and more immersed in Masonry, especially its High Grades. Whatever sympathy may have existed originally between him and Saint-Martin when they were merely correspondents - their paths were now dividing, and the born mystic was disposing of the occult yoke placed upon him by his early Master. There is evidence of strained relations when Saint-Martin

wrote from Paris on July 30, 1775, to dissuade Willermoz from supposing that he was seeking the latter's conversion to his own views or was presuming to pronounce judgment upon him. At the same time certain matters, the nature of which does not emerge in the letter, made it necessary for the peace of both that he should no longer be a guest of his friend, though for the sake of the Order and its - members he must return to Lyons and remain there a given time. It should not appear, in other words, that there was estrangement between himself and Willermoz. When, therefore, he took a lodging in isolation, it would be explained that he was following up chemical experiments. Whether the device served its purpose we do not know, but after it reached a term the two correspondents do not seem to have met one another for ten years. They continued to write occasionally, and they remained friends.

It has been suggested that Des Erreurs filled the purse of Saint- Martin, but the evidence of his improved position cannot be accounted for by reference to that source its considerable measure of success notwithstanding. On the contrary, there are indications that he was on better terms with his father, and I infer that thenceforward he was not without modest means. It has been suggested also that the authorship of the book was kept a profound secret. this is unlikely in the nature of things, for it was obviously well known at Lyons prior to publication. It has been said by one of his biographers that he "became known widely and was in request everywhere." His own memorial notes bear witness to the distinguished circle of his acquaintance, and so also do his letters. It is unnecessary to labour the point, and as, for the rest, his life in social and intellectual circles during the seven years between 1775 and 1782 has left little trace behind it, I pass on to the latter date, to which his second book belongs. In one of those unconverted intimations which seem to open for a moment his whole heart of purpose, Saint-Martin says that his work has its fount and course in the Divine.(1a) He is alluding to work of life rather than books, but it is true of all that he wrote, and the *Tableau Naturel des Rapports qui existent entre Dieu, l'Homme et Univers* was assuredly undertaken for the justification by means of

their unfoldment of the ways of God to man. It was written at Paris, as he tells us, partly in the Luxembourg at the house of the Marquise de Lusignan and partly in that of the Marquise de la Croix. (1a) Publication took place in two parts appearing, as previously, in one volume elated 1782 - at the symbolical Edinburgh, which on this occasion is more likely to mean Paris than Lyons though the latter place is understood by bibliographers. We have seen that Des Erreurs confessed to recurring reservations, and it has all the atmosphere of a truncated document issued from a Temple of the Mysteries, or at least a Secret College. The - Natural Scheme of Correspondences, on the surface, withholdi nothing, yet it adopts another air of mystery. The entirely anonymous publishers state in a prefatory note (1) that they received the MS. from an unknown person; (2) that it had numerous marginal additions in- a different hand; (3) that they seemed different from the rest of the work; and (4) that in printing they had been placed in quotation commas, to distinguish them from the rest of the text. When tased on the subs ject by Baron de Liebistorf, Saint-Martin admitted (1) that the passages referred to were his; (2) that the publisher regarded them as out of keeping with the rest of the work; (3) that he gave the explanation which he did to prepare readers; and (4) that he was allowed to have his way. It happens that the paragraphs in quotations are the most enigmatical parts of the work, and suggest derivation from Pasqually's occult instructions; it happens also that Saint-Martin was replying to a correspondent who was not initiated; and if, therefore, what he says does not quite cover the facts, we may take it as the best that he could do without discovering his source. In any case, the paragraphs were written - i.e. expressed - by himself, and, for the rest, their consequence is not in proportion to their obscurity.

The Tableau compares the universe to a great temple: "the stars are its lights, the earth is its altar, all corporeal beings are its holocausts, and man, who is priest of the Eternal, offers the sacrifices." It follows from the logic of the symbolism that he himself is the chief holocaust, and this must be the sense in which it is said also that the universe is "like a great fire lighted since the

beginning of things for the purification of all corrupted beings." Finally, it is "a great allegory or fable which must give place to a grand morality." When it is affirmed elsewhere that the external world is illusory, the reference presumably is to its surface sense, apart from the inward meaning. God is the meaning and God the grand morality; creation is not merely His visible sign, but a channel through which His thoughts are communicated to intelligent beings. Here is the only mode of communication for fallen man, namely, through signs and emblems. But these and the whole signifying universe are earnest of God's love for corrupted creatures and evidence that He is at work unceasingly "to remove the separation so contrary to their felicity." As it is certain that He does not work in vain, it follows that a day will come when there shall be no separateness thenceforward. So does the end emerge with all true thought implying - when it does not express - the doctrine of unity, all true paths being paths that lead thereto, and God Himself - One, Immutable and Eternal - the Witness from everlasting to this our end of being. Here is the Great Work, and it is to be performed "by restoring in our faculties the same law, the same order, the same regularity by which all beings are directed in Nature," or, in other words, by acting no longer in our own name, but in that of the living God. It is a work of the will in its redirection, for this is "the agent bar which alone man and every free being can efface within them and round them the traces of error and crime. The revindication of the will is therefore the chief work of all fallen creatures.

The same lesson is conveyed in symbolical language when it is said that "the object of man on earth is to employ all rights and powers of his being in rarefying as far as possible the intervening media between himself and the true Sun, so that - the opposition being practically none there may be a free passage, and that the rays of light may reach him without refraction." It will be seen that, as in *Des Erreurs*, the instrument by which we fall is that-also by which we must rise: the evil in man originated in the will of man, and thereby it must be stamped out. His "crime" is defined as "the abuse of the knowledge he possessed concerning the union of the principle of the universe with the universe." His penalty was the

privation of this knowledge. The definition is dogmatic, and it is obvious that Saint-Martin can throw no light on the real nature of the alleged knowledge: otherwise he must have undone the crime in his own person. He is least convincing when discussing the legendary Fall, and most when conveying his own thoughts apart from any formal system. When he tells us that truth is in God, that it is written in all about us, that its messages are meant for our reading, that the light within leads to the light without; that the principle of being and of life is within us, that it cannot perish, that the regeneration of our "virtues" is possible; and that we can ascend to a demonstration of the Active and Invisible Principle, from which the universe derives its existence and its laws: we are then in the presence of the mystic who is speaking on the warrants of his proper insight

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## CHAPTER V

### THE MAN OF DESIRE

AFTER the publication of *Le Tableau Naturel* Saint-Martin remained less or more at Pares, and his intermittent correspondence with Willermoz is at times scarcely intelligible in the absence of the latter's communications. Willermoz evidently was passing through a strenuous period, connected perhaps with embroilments consequent on the Masonic Convention of Wilhelmsbad, held in 1782, and the fate of the Strict Observance. There is one allusion which suggests vaguely the his torical transformation of that Rite at Lyons prior to 1778, and the creation thereby of the Knights Beneficent of the Holy City. But there is no certainty on the subject, and for the rest we learn only of Saint-Martin's brief interest in the discovery of Mesmer, his connection with a society instituted by that great comet of a season, and his presence at certain cures operated magnetically by Puysegur. A single remark informs us that he would take no part in the Convention of Paris, summoned by the Rite of the Philalethes. We reach in this manner the month of April, 1785, when Saint Martin had received such news from Willermoz that in his reply of the 29th (1) he expresses his rapture on

learning that the sun has risen on Israel; (2) he affirms that the man so chosen is for him henceforward a man of God whom he will venerate as the anointed one of the Saviour; (3) he entreats him to pardon whatever wrongs he may be thought to have committed against him on his own part; (4) he ascribes all differences which have arisen between them to his own ignorance (5) he condemns himself for his temerity in having published anything; (6) he asks Willermoz to intercede for him with something which appears to be called La chose, whose place he has taken unasked; (7) he prays to be enlightened on the faults of his own heart the errors of his mind and of his works, (8) he places himself under his orders and terms him his master, holy friend, father in God and Christ Jesus.

It looks evident in a word that Saint-Martin stood ready to set aside all his previous views and inferentially those which had always disposed him towards the inward way of the mystics rather than that of his first Master What, therefore, had occurred ? I have forestalled the event unavoidably in my third chapter.

According to Dr. Papus, the archives in his possession show that after prolonged failure Willermoz reached the end of his labours, that he obtained "phenomena of the highest importance," which culminated in 1785, or "thirteen years after the death of his initiator Martines de Pasqually." More explicitly, the Being who is said to be described by Willermoz as "the Unknown Agent charged with the work of initiation" - otherwise, perhaps, La chose - materialised at Lyons and gave instructions which - as we have seen were reduced to writing.

Occurrences of this kind being innumerable at the present day, I suppose that we are not in a position to sympathize with the raptures of Saint-Martin, his tears or his changing front. His next letter, dated May 13, indicates that he had been reassured and consoled by Willermoz, for which he praises God. He waits now on a summons to Lyons, that he may see and hear for himself. Meanwhile he and his correspondent will remain united through time and eternity. On June 30 he has made preparations for the journey and is looking to greet Willermoz soon after the letter under that date. Of what followed we know little and next to

nothing, except that fifteen months later Saint-Martin is at Paris, bewailing his imprudence in having spoken too freely to certain brethren and thus prejudiced the "enjoyments" of his friend. (2a) In January, 1787, he is in London, where he remained for some six months, making the acquaintance of William Law and the astronomer Herschel, the Comte de Divonne, Dutens and the Russian Prince Galitzin, with whom he was domiciled. It was in London also, as he tells us, that he wrote his third book, *L'Homme de Desir*, though it was not published till 1790, and then at Lyons. It is important not only in itself, as one of Saint-Martin's most inspired writings, but as showing beyond debate that, whatever experiences had awaited him at Lyons, they cooled the ardour kindled by their first indications, and he had returned to his own path with an increased sense of dedication. I can say only that the hunger and thirst after God are in all its pages. This is not, however, to suggest that he is denuded of all interests in the Lyons phenomena: his only letter written to Willermoz while in England offers a contrary indication; but the interest appears detached.

In July, 1787, Saint-Martin passed through Paris on his way to Amboise, where his father had been stricken with paralysis. In September he was again at Lyons, but it was in the absence of Willermoz. Thereafter he paid a second visit to Italy, visiting Siena and Rome. In the early part of 1788 Papus reports that the apparitions of the Agent had ceased, according to a letter of Willermoz. (1a) In April of that year Saint-Martin is at Paris and about to visit his father, who is still alive, at the native place of both. In June he proceeded to Strasbourg, where he resided for three years, the happiest of all his life. As I said long ago: "It was here, under the auspices of Rodolphe Salzmann, also mystically disposed, and of Madame de Boecklin, his most intimate and cherished woman friend, that he made his first acquaintance with the writings of Jacob Bohme; here he became intimate with the Chevalier de Silferhielm, a nephew of Swedenborg; and all his horizon widened under the influence of the Teutonic theosopher. On December 16, 1789, he asked Willermoz whether he could participate in the "initiation" attached to the Regime Rectifie without belonging to its Symbolical Lodge. I do

not think that Papus knew what this meant, and therefore wisely offered no word of comment. But the Regime Ecossais Ancien et Rectifie was the Strict Observance as transformed at Lyons and ratified at Wilhelmsbad; more especially it was the Craft Degrees of this Rite and their supplement the Grade of St. Andrew. Beyond it were the novitiate and chivalry of the Holy City, and these again beyond were two final Grades, which I do not propose to specify by name, as they were and are in the hiddenness. It is to these that Saint-Martin refers under the vague title of "initiations." He did not apparently get a straight answer, and on July 4, 1790, he asked Willermoz to advise the proper quarter of his resignation from the Interior Order - i.e., the novitiate and chivalry - and from all lists and registers in which his name may have been inscribed since 1785. He points out that in the spirit he had never been integrated therein. His intention apparently was to remain among the Coens - i.e., the Elect Priesthood - but how nominally we call imagine from the utter detachment of his letter, (1a) the references to his simple mode of life, and above all his closing words, in which he registers a hope that he has separated for ever from those complicated paths which had always wearied him. It is an eloquent commentary on the manifestations of Lyons, the dictated instructions of La chose, the astral travellings of D'Hauterive, and the clairvoyances of the "lucids" who seem to have assisted at the operations. There are no further letters from Saint-Martin to Willermoz, and already during this year, in some early month, the Agent had received "on demand" and had destroyed "more than eighty folios" of his dictated instructions, the same not having been "published," as Willermos states in a letter quoted by Papus.

It follows that "the Unknown Agent charged with the work of initiation" had undone that work, and whether or not, as suggested- but Papus seems doubtful - the manifestations continued at intervals till 1796, it would seem that there is no record of proceedings, and the whole thing sagged out. The Elect Priesthood missed its mark; with all his ceremonial, all his occult powers, Pasqually scored a failure, and the Master who emerged from the unseen, carrying such high



ascribed warrants, permitted himself, through sheer lack in resources, to be circumvented by as the emissaries of Robespierre." Meanwhile the star of Saint-Martin's influence grew from more to more. *L'Homme de Desir* was reprinted several times, and in the highest circles of society, at Strasbourg and Paris, in the palace of the Duchesse de Bourbon, amidst the convulsions of the revolutions he taught the way of the mystics.

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## CHAPTER VI

### LATER LIFE AND WRITINGS

IT was at Strasbourg and, I think, towards the end of his sojourn in this city of blessed memories that Saint-Martin wrote another of his most suggestive treatises, *Le Nouvel Homme*, "the aim of which," as he tells us, "is to describe what we should expect in regeneration." (1a) It presents three epochs of symbolism: the first corresponds to the history of Israel, regarded as that of universal election, man's own nature being the Promised Land, whence it is necessary to cast out the wicked and idolatrous nations that have ruled therein, after which the altars of the Lord must be set up instead and the Law proclaimed by the higher part of our nature. The second epoch is that of the Christ-Life, which must be conceived and born within us for the work of our redemption. All stages of the Divine Life in Palestine are marshalled to illustrate the story of the New Man from the moment of His birth within us to that of mystical death, and from the descent into the underworld to the last and greatest mystery on the Mountain of Ascension. To the Second Advent belongs the third epoch of symbolism, being that of the Apocalypse, the new heaven and the new earth declared within us, the tabernacle of God with men, the Celestial Jerusalem built up into our spiritual being.

The sojourn at Strasbourg came to an end in 1791, and for perhaps a year Saint-Martin was chiefly at Paris, where he wrote his neat book, entitled *Ecce Homo*; "to forewarn people against the wonders and prophecies of the time," to indicate

the "degree of abasement" into which man has fallen and of which the passion for lower marvels, like those of somnambulism, appears to be the prime example. The thesis in this sense is a strange but pregnant commentary respecting the transmutation of interests on the part of one who for a moment was integrated in a school of Mesmer and was a friend or fellow-worker of Puysegur. *Ecce Homo* was partly written as a counsel for the Duchesse de Bourbon and very likely in her own house. It appeared prior to *Le. Nouvel Homme*, though composed subsequently: both worlds, however, were published in 1792, the Reign of Terror notwithstanding. Saint-Martin was still in Paris during that dread ordeal. "The streets near the house I was in were a field of battle; the house itself was a hospital where the wounded were brought and, moreover, was threatened every moment with invasion and pillage. In the midst of all this I had to go, at the risk of my life, to take care of my sister, half a league from my dwelling." (1a) It is to be inferred from a later record that the "dwelling" was that of the Duchesse.

There is no space here to speak of Saint-Martin's political theories, of his feelings towards the French Revolution, of certain things without importance or consequence which occurred to him therein. I am concerned only with the deeper issues of his life and thoughts. A writer on errors and truths had obviously something to say on the basis of governments, the authority of sovereigns and on jurisprudence, while a searcher of religion and theosophy, who had passed through the world-crisis at the end of the eighteenth century at its very heart and centre, could neither fail to have his part therein nor to leave us reflections thereon. We have *Philosophical and Religious Considerations on the French Revolution*, *Light on Human Association* and a few other pamphlets which do not call to be named.

Saint-Martin had also some activities of another kind imposed upon him, as, e.g., when he was called to the *Ecole Normale*, instituted to train teachers for public instruction. These things did not last and left no mark behind them. In September, 1792, the health of his father called him again to Amboise, where he remained for a year, or a considerable time after the father's death. We hear of

him then at Petit Bourg, a country house of the Duchesse de Bourbon, and afterwards at Paris till the spring of 1794, when "a decree against the privileged and proscribed classes, amongst which it was his lot to be born, enforced his return to Amboise till it was cancelled in his respect in January, 1795, when the work of L'Ecole Normale brought him back to the capital for a period. His time appears to have been divided between Paris and his native town till the end of 1799, and I mention this year because on December 24 Saint-Martin lost so much by the death of the Baron Kirchberger de Liebistorf, a kindred spirit with whom he had maintained for five years what I described long ago as "the most memorable, the most beautiful, the most fascinating of all theosophical correspondences. (1a) It became available in English so far back as 1863, but the edition has been out of print for decades, and I question whether there could be a better gift than an annotated translation at the present day by one who knows Saint-Martin, his work and his period. It contains the true marrow, spirit and quintessence of the French mystic, and has been referred to often in my notes.

His devotion to Jacob Bohme was the chief mental characteristic of his later life; it is ever present in his correspondences above described, but I have never been able to see that it changed his own views: it may be true to say that it deepened them, but he was on sure mystic ground already before the Teutonic theosopher gave him his own light.

I do not think that it would have helped him to alter for the better one line of *L'Homme de Desir*, though he has left it on record that in the light of Jacob Bohme he should have written *Le Nouvel Homme* differently, or perhaps not at all. In the year 1800 *L'Esprit des Choses* appeared at Paris in two volumes, with a Latin epigraph on the title in which it was affirmed that "man is the mirror of the totality of things." Concerning this suggestive work Saint-Martin has offered three points of information: (1) That it was projected originally under the title of *Natural Revelations*, collected from original notes, with additions thereunto; (2) that it embraces the whole circle of things physical and scientific, spiritual and Divine;

(3) that it is a kind of introduction to the works of Jacob Bohme. The last in its final reduction must be called indicative of intention, and Saint-Martin, I do not doubt, was conscious that his own intimations were in bonds of spiritual espousals with his great German peer, but in their contributions to the higher literature of the soul there are no two mystics so utterly unlike each other in all their former and modes. It is a question, therefore, of penetrating below the surface, when that which we reach is the heart of union common to all who have followed the great quest of experience in God. It is certain that Saint-Martin grew daily in the consciousness of such union with Bohme, and when he continued in his own manner to deliver his own message it seemed to him doubtless that he was, following the message of his precursor. For *L'Esprit des Choses*, man is the organ of Divine Order, man is the mirror of all things. Nature is in somnambulism and we are involved therein, whence I suppose it may be inferred. that she waits on our awaking and passes out of sleep in us. These things and many others are notions which were with Saint-Martin from the beginning. Occasionally there are higher and deeper things than those which we have heard previously, but they are not of Bohme nor of any other than the French mystic himself - as, e.g., that the soul becomes the Name of the Lord, . and the Name is declared within it. There are practically no materials for the external life of Saint- Martin after the year 1799; the *Portrait Historique* tells us practically nothing, and we know of him only by his books. In the closing years of his life he was working zealously at translations of Bohme, *Aurora*, *The Three Principles*, *Forty Questions* and *Threefold Life of Man*, but he had made a beginning much earlier. We are not concerned with these versions, but *Le Ministere de l'Homme-Esprit*, (1a) published in 1802, his last original work, is in some respects the most important of all and from his own-point of view was written more clearly than the rest, though he felt its remoteness from common human notions and human interests. It has been held to illustrate his intention of marrying his "first school" to the Teutonic theosopher, but again the kind of marriage is that of the amity at the root of all the great mystics and their great subjects. For the rest, the book is built

on the basis of his own anterior writings, the substance of which he presents in the opening pages, as he gives also a summary of Bohme and indicates unawares certain salient points of doctrinal correspondence between the latter and Martines de Pasqually exhibited in *La Reintegration des Etres*. Apart from all systems and all authorities, the ministry is a book of innumerable detached lights, some of which belong to the order of first magnitude. It is possible to name only its "intimations of immortality," of death and the gate of life, of the path which is opened in regeneration, of spiritual life and its communication, of the Sabbath attained by Nature, the Sabbath of the soul and the Sabbath of the Word. There is also the doctrine of the Eternal Word, as it passed through the alembic of the French mystic's mind, its relation to the universe and man, how it is the measure of all things and is the very Word of Life, in opposition to that which Saint-Martin calls the Word of Death.

The Ministry has been termed his swan's song, but it is rather his last contemplation, in which he opened many wells of thought and looked across many paths of vision. On January 18, 1803, he recorded in his notes that this date completed his sixtieth year and that it had opened to him a new world. "My spiritual hopes proceed in growth continual. I advance, thanks be to God, towards those great beatitudes which were shown forth to me long ago, and shall crown all joys with which I have been encompassed continually in my, earthly life." (1a) A note added in the summer says that he had received certain warnings of a physical enemy and thought that it would carry him off as it had done with his father before him. He asked only the help of Providence, that he might hold himself prepared for the event. (2a) On October 13, 1803, at Aulnay, near Sceaux, in the house of a friend - Comte Lenoir La-Roche - after an apoplectic stroke, he passed painlessly away in a final act of prayer.

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## CHAPTER VII

### MODERN MARTINISM

It will be seen that I have depended throughout on printed documents, no others being available to research in England, but that the sources of many which have been quoted are in the archives of the Martinist Order. They would appear to form, however, comparatively a small part of those which have been certified as extant at different periods. We are told (1a) (1) that the archives of the Elect Priesthood were deposited in 1781 with Savalette de Langes, who was the President of the Philalethes; (2) that after his death they were sold indiscriminately, together with those of the Philalethes and the Rite Ecossais Philosophique, and were purchased for next to nothing by three Masonic Brethren, who returned them to the proper quarters, two of them retaining these of the Elect Priesthood, as they had been members of the Rite; (3) that this restitution took place in 1806; (4) that the two custodians delivered them in 1809 to another member, named Destigny, on his return from St. Domingo, he being a legatee of Pasqually, and having otherwise a greater claim upon them; (5) that Destigny was already in possession of the surviving West Indian archives; (6) that in 1812 his collection was enriched by those of the Orient of Avignon, which had been taken into Italy prior to the Revolution; (7) that the whole remained in his keeping till 1868, when he transferred them to M. Villarial, a year before his death, in whose possession they continued at least till the end of 1899. They comprised the records of eleven Orients - otherwise Lodges - of the Order, those of Leogana in the West Indies having been lost in a fire, and those of Lyons having come into the hands of Papus otherwise of the Martinist Order.

As regards the archives of Lyons we are told by Papus whence and how they or their transcripts were derived by him. His account has been summarised in my second chapter. I have specified also the documents in the hands of M. Matter's descendants, he being himself a descendant of Rodolphe de Salzmann, whom I have mentioned previously as one of the Strasbourg circle. They are said to include the correspondence of Saint-Martin with Salzmann himself, with Mme de Boecklin, the Comte de Divonne and others, as also that of Salzmann. But there are owners of other collections D'Effinger, Toumyer, Munier (1a) - who are not

even names to us. Of each and all it has to be said that nothing has been heard of them for over twenty years and that the Great War has intervened. We have been promised for the same period a *Histoire Generale de l'Ordre des Elus Coens* and a study of Willermoz based on the archives of Lyons, but they have not appeared and we are not likely to see them. In view of the wealth of material it may well be that the definitive life of Saint-Martin and of his earlier if not later concerns still remains to be done. I have presented a mere outline, and in some sense a supplement to my former extended work.

It remains to speak briefly of L'Ordre Martiniste. We learn from Camille Flammarion that between 1860 and 1870 he was acquainted with a litterateur named Henri Delaage, who is mentioned also by Eliphas Levi; that he heard much from Delaage concerning M. de Chaptal, his grandfather, who knew Saint-Martin, apparently fairly well. (1a) These are the bare facts, to which it may be added that at the beginning of his occult life Papus seemingly got to know Delaage and received from him, some months before the latter's death, what is termed a *pauvre depot* (2a), *constitue par deux lettres et quelques points* in fact, the modern Martinist cipher S I which is rendered *Silencieux Inconnus*, otherwise the Unknown Silent Ones. Delaage had written in his time two or three occult books which were fantastic in matter and impossible in style. They do not suggest his connection with any society for the exposition of Saint-Martin's mystical teaching, either secretly or in public, and so far as Papus is concerned he fails to explain why the cipher was communicated or what it signified to the previous custodian. It led him, however, to believe and proclaim in terms of certitude that Saint-Martin had himself initiated M. de Chaptal and to establish or reconstitute L'Ordre Martiniste in 1884. (1a) Between 1887 and 1890 he produced Rituals for the Order, arranged in three Degrees, which I have praised on several occasions for their sincerity, simplicity and reserve in respect of claims. They were termed (1) Associate, (2) Initiated Martinist, and (3) Initiator, the lastes implied by its title - conveying a licence for the propagation of the Order by all who had attained this its highest rank. Every person who held the

Third Degree could thus constitute a new centre. The mode adopted was usually that which is known technically as "communication," that is to say, personally and not in Lodge or Temple. To my certain knowledge reception was arranged even by post. It is obvious that after this manner a vast membership could be secured in a very short space, assuming any reasonable zeal among the workers and something colourable or attractive on which they could act. Moreover, there were no fees of any kind. There is no question that L'Ordre Martiniste spread rapidly in France, and in addition to the delegates constituted automatically by the Third Degree there were Lodges in various towns. There was membership also in other countries, England itself not excepted, while the Order was specially successful in North and South America. We hear also of propagation in Egypt and even Asia.

In 1891 a Supreme Council was constituted at Paris and ruled the whole Order. It became a centre also for numerous collateral interests, all carefully organised, including esoteric groups and Faculties of Science and Philosophy, which held examinations apparently and granted degrees at their value. Papus was an indefatigable worker, and before the century was out it must be acknowledged that he was at the head of a movement which may be almost called colossal in respect of its magnitude. The reasons are not far to seek: it was a form of initiation and it made no claim on Masonry; it receded both sexes; it had a distinct religious side, apart from dogmata and - outside all sectarianism it was in some sense a Christian thing. As such, it must have appealed to multitudes in France who had lost faith in the Latin Church and yet had spiritual interests. Moreover, it carried the seals and talismans of occult sciences, which it claimed' to teach and also to reconcile with the regnant science of the day. As such, its apparent justifications, if not its warrants, were in Spiritism, Psychical Research, the Schools of Nancy and Salpetriere not to speak of the less recognized though not less momentous school of Animal Magnetism. But having offered this appreciation I have virtually set L'Ordre Martiniste at the poles asunder from Saint- Martin the mystic. In late and early writings Papus affirmed continually that



when the disciple of Pasqually followed his own path, having left that of his Master, he not only established a Masonic Rite, as others had said previously, but also an Order of his own which spread even into Russia. Now, has so-called evidences are out of court in every case. I have examined them long since and set them utterly aside: there is no need to retrace the ground. The Masonic historians were blundering over terms and titles when they foisted a Rite on Saint-Martin, and Papus was reading in a glass of vision whence saw the mystic at the head of an Order propagated like his own. I leave it at this, though it is difficult to understand how he could have deceived himself. He has not escaped criticism of a rougher kind, but to me it seems that he had a constitutional incapacity for pronouncing validly on questions of evidences and that anything passed for proof in respect of his own bias.

The fact remains that in 1899 or thereabouts L'Ordre Martiniste may be said to have reached its zenith, but it had sown, I think, already the seeds of its own destruction. It had begun to encroach on the Masonic field, and was approaching perilously the position of an unauthorised aspect of the Craft. Practically the entire branch of the Order in North America, extending to thousands, broke away from the Supreme Council at Paris and reincorporated independently on this account alone. A few only continued under the old obedience, among others the novelist Margaret B. Peeke, who was rewarded by Papus with the Grade of Rose Crois. (1a) There are no statistics before me, but it seems certain that in France - where Freemasonry, such as it is, must be called exceedingly strong the course taken could have been scarcely less than disastrous; yet it was not amended in consequence. The years went on, and I think that L'Initiation, an official Martinist publication, came to an end before the War. But the Great War came, which broke up everything belonging to occult interests of the organised kind. The Grand Master Papus died in the course of it, in the heroism of a physician's service. The peace of Versailles was at last signed, and at no long time thereafter the old interests began to lift up their heads: it seemed also as if the relaxed tension itself gave birth automatically to new adventures by the score in

thought and dream. Occultism in Paris was characterized by activities of every kind - new movements, new associations, new periodicals, including many official organs for one or another dedication, but most of them mushroom growths. We can imagine that L'Ordre Martiniste did not remain in abeyance, but it seems now a shadow of its former self, is split up by rival obediences and has entered into union with decried Masonic Rites. Whether it will emerge into clearer light no one remote from the centre can dare to say, but to all appearance at least its time is over. Once at the head of most French movements of the occult kind, it is now but one of a score; and I do not know in what sense the gracious spirit of Saint-Martin can be said to abide therein. If ever a time shall come when those who move in its circle and those who rule at its centre will have realized that he left for ever the occult and Masonic sanctuaries for the Church Mystic of Christian Theosophy, they may find his directing light shining towards the end of true Mysticism; but in the Orient of Memphis never, and never in those of Mizraim, or in any substituted form of Freemasonry which is without God in the world. Meanwhile I tend to believe that men and women of spiritual mind in France, who are not under the obedience of Rome, will remember Saint-Martin as one who after his own manner belongs to that great chain which began in the Christian world with Dionysius the Areopagite and added link to link through all the ages subsequent.

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